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Central African Republic configuration

Summary record of the 1st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 2 July 2008, at 11 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Grauls ..... (Belgium)

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08-40861 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 11.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters (PBC/3/CAF/1)

1. **The Chairperson** said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Commission wished to hold open meetings under the Central African Republic configuration.

2. *It was so decided.*

Adoption of the agenda

3. *The agenda was adopted.*

Additional members of the Central African Republic country-specific configuration

4. **The Chairperson** recalled that, by letter of 26 June 2008, the Chairperson of the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission had transmitted to the Central African Republic country-specific configuration a list of prospective additional participant States and regional, subregional and international organizations. Given that no objections had been raised, he took it that members agreed to invite them to attend the meetings of the configuration.

5. *It was so decided.*

6. **The Chairperson** said that additional member States had expressed an interest in attending the meetings of the configuration and would submit formal requests to the Organizational Committee.

7. **Mr. Fall** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic) said that the Central African Republic needed international assistance to promote good governance, security sector reform and economic development, which were areas in which the United Nations country team had been working with $10 million assistance from the Peacebuilding Fund. In addition to the work of the United Nations, bilateral cooperation and the role of the European Union, World Bank, African Development Bank and International Monetary Fund were also important.

8. The United Nations was also assisting the Government in establishing an inclusive political dialogue aimed at restoring peace, promoting sustainable development and establishing respect for human rights and accountability. In preparation for the dialogue, the Government had concluded peace agreements with all the rebel groups in the north of the country. The peace agreement concluded on 21 June 2008 had reaffirmed the ceasefire commitment of the rebel movement and had promoted the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of rebel fighters. The inclusive dialogue included a call for various acts of amnesty except for crimes under investigation by the International Criminal Court. A monitoring committee comprising members of the Government, rebel groups, the United Nations and the Organization of la Francophonie had been set up to monitor implementation.

9. With United Nations assistance, the Government had brought together opposition parties, the rebel movement and civil society within the framework of the preparatory committee. From January to April 2008, the preparatory committee had discussed political and governance issues, the security situation and military groups, and socio-economic development. The committee's findings had been included in a report that had been submitted to President Bozizé on 25 April 2008 and would form the basis of the inclusive political dialogue. The Central African Republic peacebuilding configuration would continue the work of the United Nations system in the Central African Republic and would add its own strategic vision. Furthermore, the Department of Political Affairs had established an inter-agency group to review the mandate of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic with a view to supporting the work of the Central African Republic configuration.

10. **Ms. Viotti** (Brazil) said that the Central African Republic configuration would help foster an inclusive dialogue aimed at promoting reconciliation, stability and development and would give impetus to the priority plan for the Fund. She recalled that a two-track approach had been adopted in the Guinea-Bissau configuration with a view to combining a longer-term peacebuilding strategy with quick-impact projects that had an immediate effect on the daily lives of the population.

11. **Mr. Onanga M. Ndiaye** (Gabon) said that the President of Gabon had shown his firm commitment to establishing lasting peace throughout the region by facilitating the peace agreements of 9 May and 21 June 2008. The agreement of 21 June represented an

important milestone and would serve as a tool for restoring harmony to the country. Significant aid had been received from France, the European Union and the African Development Bank for that process, but a number of donors had not honoured their commitments.

12. **Mr. Majoor** (Netherlands) expressed confidence that, with the support of the United Nations and the Government, progress would be made in consolidating peace in the Central African Republic and that the country configuration would live up to the high expectations of Central Africans and of the international community.

13. **Ms. Donova** (Russian Federation) said that the Central African Republic configuration would require additional funding. Clarification was also needed of those areas of the priority plan in which projects would be carried out, whether those projects had been approved, and the extent to which the Government was participating in the plan.

14. **Mr. Schwaiger** (European Commission) said that the European Commission fully supported the security and development sectors and had provided funding for the Multinational Force of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community. In September 2008 it would sign an indicative development programme for Central Africa to the value of 137 million euros.

15. **Mr. El Shinawy** (Egypt) asked what the next steps would be under the workplan and whether priorities other than disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform had been identified. The Peacebuilding Support Office might also need to start mapping gaps and resources in order to facilitate quick action after the identification of priorities.

16. **Mr. Camara** (International Organization of la Francophonie) said that his organization acknowledged the important role of President Bongo in promoting peace in the subregion and reaffirmed its commitment to cooperating with partners in the consolidation of peace in the region.

17. **Ms. Mungwa** (African Union) said that the establishment of the Central African Republic configuration was timely in the light of the conclusion of the peace agreements of 9 May and 21 June 2008. The African Union had worked to promote lasting peace in the country through its field mission and offered its full support to the Central African Republic, which was a key country in the subregion.

18. **Mr. Fall** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic) said that the Peacebuilding Fund was being used in three key areas determined by the Government, namely governance and the rule of law, security sector reform, and recovery of zones affected by conflict.

19. **Ms. McAskie** (Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support) said that as an initial course of action, the emergency window had been used to fund the preparatory process for the inclusive national dialogue. With respect to the use of the Fund, decisions on projects and disbursements would be made on the ground in the future through a steering committee. The first field visit would therefore help identify key areas in need of funding.

Peacebuilding in the Central African Republic

Indicative workplan: preliminary ideas on the work of the Central African Republic configuration

20. **The Chairperson** said that members of the Central African Republic configuration had expressed concern at the number and frequency of meetings convened in the Commission's other three configurations. The workplan should build on lessons learned in the other configurations and provide for fewer meetings while maintaining the same quality of work.

21. **Mr. Doraiswami** (India) said that his delegation strongly endorsed the proposal and would help maintain the high standard of work.

22. **Ms. Hulan** (Canada) said that her delegation had expressed concern at the number of meetings and therefore endorsed the proposal. Analytical material should be distributed in a timely manner and fewer strategic meetings convened.

23. **Mr. Camara** (International Organization of la Francophonie) said that his delegation was mindful of the difficulty of attending a large number of meetings and firmly supported the proposal.

24. **The Chairperson** said that he took it that members wished to endorse his proposal to streamline the working methods of the configuration.

25. *It was so decided.*

Other matters

26. **The Chairperson** said that he would be travelling to the Central African Republic the following week at the invitation of President Bozizé. He would meet with relevant national authorities, the diplomatic community, civil society and United Nations staff. At the next meeting of the Central African Republic configuration he would present a mission report on existing national planning frameworks and strategies and on the work of the United Nations. The aim of the report would be to guide discussions on the integrated peacebuilding strategy for the Central African Republic.

27. **Ms. Donova** (Russian Federation) wondered whether the Chairperson would distribute the plan for the visit beforehand so that her delegation could transmit it to the Embassy of the Russian Federation in the Central African Republic.

28. **Mr. Poukré-Kono** (Central African Republic) said that his delegation appreciated the establishment of the Central African Republic configuration and the offer of its members to assist the country in overcoming the crisis. It would cooperate fully with the Peacebuilding Commission and follow all its recommendations. In that spirit of cooperation, President Bozizé had invited members to visit the country to see its problems on the ground and to meet national stakeholders. In particular, members would witness the food crisis that had affected the country as a result of the surge in global oil prices and the drought that had hit parts of the country. Many families suffered from hunger, as 80 per cent of the country depended on agriculture, which was experiencing difficulties. Industrialization would combat hunger, reduce unemployment, redistribute wealth and make use of natural resources. The State was aware of its responsibilities in satisfying the needs of the population and would implement the Peacebuilding Commission's recommendations. However, international cooperation was also essential to the peacebuilding process. In the past, the Government's efforts had not been fully supported and some emergency appeals for aid had not been answered. It was therefore time for international partners to fulfil promises and pledges.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.